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General and complete disarmament: implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction

Security Council
Sixty-eighth year

Letter dated 19 September 2013 from the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We have the honour to enclose herewith the framework for elimination of Syrian chemical weapons reached in Geneva on 14 September 2013 between the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, and the United States Secretary of State of the United States of America, John Kerry.

We should be grateful if you would circulate this letter and its enclosures as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 99 (v), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Samantha **Power**
Permanent Representative of the United States of America
to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 19 September 2013 from the Permanent Representatives of the Russian Federation and the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Framework for elimination of Syrian chemical weapons

Taking into account the decision of the Syrian Arab Republic to accede to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and the commitment of the Syrian authorities to provisionally apply the Convention prior to its entry into force, the United States and the Russian Federation express their joint determination to ensure the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme in the quickest and safest manner.

For this purpose, the United States and the Russian Federation have committed to preparing and submitting in the next few days to the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) a draft decision setting down special procedures for expeditious destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme and stringent verification thereof. The principles on which this decision should be based, in the view of both sides, are set forth in annex A. The United States and the Russian Federation believe that these extraordinary procedures are necessitated by the prior use of these weapons in Syria and the volatility of the Syrian civil war.

The United States and the Russian Federation commit to work together towards prompt adoption of a Security Council resolution that reinforces the decision of the OPCW Executive Council. This resolution will also contain steps to ensure its verification and effective implementation and will request that the Secretary-General, in consultation with OPCW, submit recommendations to the Security Council on an expedited basis regarding the role of the United Nations in eliminating the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

The United States and the Russian Federation concur that the Security Council resolution should provide for review, on a regular basis, of the implementation in Syria of the decision of the Executive Council of OPCW, and in the event of non-compliance, including unauthorized transfer, or any use of chemical weapons by anyone in Syria, the Security Council should impose measures under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations.

The proposed joint United States-Russian OPCW draft decision supports the application of article VIII of the Chemical Weapons Convention, which provides for the referral of any cases of non-compliance to the General Assembly and the Security Council.

In furtherance of the objective to eliminate the Syrian chemical weapons programme, the United States and the Russian Federation have reached a shared assessment of the amount and type of chemical weapons involved, and are committed to the immediate international control over chemical weapons and their components in Syria. The United States and the Russian Federation expect Syria to submit, within a week, a comprehensive listing, including names, types and quantities of its chemical weapons agents, types of munitions and location and form of storage, production, and research and development facilities.

We further determined that the most effective control of these weapons may be achieved by removal of the largest amounts of weapons feasible, under OPCW supervision, and their destruction outside of Syria, if possible. We set ambitious goals for the removal and destruction of all categories of chemical-weapons-related materials and equipment, with the objective of completing such removal and destruction in the first half of 2014. In addition to chemical weapons, stocks of chemical weapons agents, their precursors, specialized chemical weapons equipment and chemical weapons munitions themselves, the elimination process must include the facilities for the development and production of these weapons. The views of both sides in this regard are set forth in annex B.

The United States and the Russian Federation have further decided that to achieve accountability for their chemical weapons, the Syrians must provide OPCW, the United Nations and other supporting personnel with the immediate and unfettered right to inspect any and all sites in Syria. The extraordinary procedures to be proposed by the United States and the Russian Federation for adoption by the OPCW Executive Council and reinforced by a Security Council resolution, as described above, should include a mechanism to ensure this right.

Under this framework, personnel under both the OPCW mandate and the United Nations mandate should be dispatched as rapidly as possible to support control, removal and destruction of Syria's chemical weapons capabilities.

The United States and the Russian Federation believe that the work of OPCW and the United Nations will benefit from the participation of experts of the five permanent members of the Security Council.

The United States and the Russian Federation strongly reiterate their position on Syria as reflected in the final communiqué of the Group of Eight summit in Northern Ireland in June 2013, especially as regards chemical weapons

The two sides intend to work closely together and with OPCW, the United Nations, all Syrian parties and other interested Member States with relevant capabilities to arrange for the security of the monitoring and destruction mission, recognizing the primary responsibility of the Syrian Government in this regard.

The United States and the Russian Federation note that there are details in furtherance of the execution of this framework that need to be addressed on an expedited basis in the coming days and commit to completing these details, as soon as practicable, understanding that time is of the essence, given the crisis in Syria.

Annex A
Principles for a decision document of the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

1. The decision should be based on article IV, paragraph 8, and article V, paragraph 10, of the Chemical Weapons Convention.

2. The decision should address the extraordinary character of the situation of the Syrian chemical weapons.

3. The decision should take into account the deposit by Syria of the instrument of accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention.

4. The decision should provide for easy accessibility by States parties to the information submitted by Syria.

5. The decision should specify which initial information Syria shall submit to the OPCW Technical Secretariat in accordance with a tightly fixed schedule and also specify an early date for submission of the formal Chemical Weapons Convention declaration.

6. The decision should oblige Syria to cooperate fully on all aspects of its implementation.

7. The decision should address a schedule for the rapid destruction of Syrian chemical weapons capabilities. This schedule should take into account the following target dates:

(a) Completion of initial OPCW on-site inspections of declared sites by November.

(b) Destruction of production and mixing/filling equipment by November.

(c) Complete elimination of all chemical weapons material and equipment in the first half of 2014.

The shortest possible final deadline, as well as intermediate deadlines, for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons capabilities should be included in the schedule.

8. The decision should provide stringent special verification measures, beginning within a few days, including a mechanism to ensure the immediate and unfettered right to inspect any and all sites.

9. The decision should address the issue of duties of the OPCW Technical Secretariat in this situation and its need for supplementary resources to implement the decision, particularly technical and personnel resources, and call upon States with relevant capacities to contribute to this end.

10. The decision should refer to the provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention obliging the Executive Council, in cases of non-compliance with the Convention, to bring the issues directly to the attention of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

Annex B
Joint framework on destruction of Syrian chemical weapons

The Russian Federation and the United States of America agree on the need to achieve rapid elimination of Syria's chemical weapons, thus reducing the threat posed to the people of Syria. They are each prepared to devote high-level attention and resources to support the monitoring and destruction mission of OPCW, both directly and in cooperation with the United Nations and other States concerned. They agree to set an ambitious goal of eliminating the threat in a rapid and effective manner.

Both parties agree that a clear picture of the state of Syrian chemical weapons could help advance a cooperative development of destruction options, including possible removal of chemical weapons outside of the Syrian territory. We agree on the importance of rapid destruction of the following categories:

(a) Production equipment;

(b) Mixing and filling equipment;

(c) Filled and unfilled weapons and delivery systems;

(d) Chemical agents (unweaponized) and precursor chemicals. For these materials, they will pursue a hybrid approach, that is, a combination of removal from Syria and destruction within Syria, depending upon site-specific conditions. They will also consider the possibility of consolidation and destruction in the coastal area of Syria;

(e) Material and equipment related to the research and development of chemical weapons.

The two parties agree to utilize the "universal matrix", developed in the course of consultations by their two national security councils, as the basis for an actionable plan.

They agree that the elimination of chemical weapons in Syria should be considered an urgent matter to be implemented within the shortest possible time period.

The parties agree to set the following target dates:

(a) Completion of initial OPCW on-site inspections by November;

(b) Destruction of production and mixing/filling equipment by November;

(c) Complete elimination of all chemical weapons material and equipment in the first half of 2014.

The Russian Federation and the United States will work together closely, including with OPCW, the United Nations and Syrian parties, to arrange for the security of the monitoring and destruction mission, noting the primary responsibility of the Syrian Government in this regard.